



City of Seattle

Department of Planning and Development
Diane M. Sugimura, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair, COBE
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Tim Burgess

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: June 4, 2010

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Report, June 9, 2010

Development Activity

In the first four months of 2010, we took in 2,012 applications for building permits with a combined value of \$625.3 million. That is a slightly higher volume compared with last year (1,926), but with a significantly higher value than in 2009 (\$454.7 million). The month of May, was however, very slow in terms of the value of construction intake. For Master Use Permits, we are running lower than 2009, averaging about 30 a month. For comparison purposes, in the early months of 2007 we averaged a high of 100+ per month, and about 80 per month in 2008.

For the first four months of 2010 we met our initial plan review targets for all three categories of building permits. We are also meeting our 120-day goal for Master Use Permits.

A little ray of sunshine? We look for every little bit these days. Building inspection requests have been a little heavier than we've seen for several months. This includes a number of foundations, which is a welcome indication that new projects are starting. These were, however, relatively small projects. We have also been hearing from developers/designers who are contemplating or planning to move some projects forward. We hope this is an indication of things to come.

Change to Monthly Land Use Billings

DPD is moving toward a monthly billing process for land use applications. This will be fully implemented later this fall. Under the current system, \$2,500 is collected at intake for most projects to cover the first ten hours of review. Review hours above the initial ten are then billed to the applicant, generally when the decision is ready to be published. This can result in a surprise to the applicant and a delay in payment to DPD. We anticipate the new



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“pay as you go” system to reduce surprises and allow DPD to recoup fees in a timely manner.

Electronic Plan Review

We are in the middle of staff training and are preparing for a soft launch in June. We expect to have a full scale pilot going by August. The soft launch and gradual implementation is caused by the need to replace a server, which will not be available for a couple months.

Neighborhood Planning

- Neighborhood Plan Implementation (2009 plans) in SE Seattle: Both Implementation Kick-Off meetings in middle May (North Beacon, then North Rainier and Othello combined) went very well. Attendees represented a broad range including those who were part of the planning process a decade ago and those who are new to civic engagement; and a range of ethnic/cultural communities. People were very engaged in prioritizing strategies/action steps and in signing up for Action Teams to implement the work. Multiple departments plus Sound Transit and Metro were represented. Over 175 people attended the meetings, and more than 100 have signed up for action teams. We also have an online survey.
- Neighborhood Advisory Committees Forming (2010 plans): Neighborhood plan updates will involve support from core groups of community members in Rainier Beach and Broadview-Bitter Lake-Haller Lake. June 8 is the application deadline for participation in Neighborhood Advisory Committees. Committee members should draw on a broad range of community interests and perspectives, and should be able to engage with the wider neighborhood.
- Working Together for Great Transit-Oriented Development: We convened a meeting of City staff and other agencies, the developer and major funders to discuss how to move the Artspace project forward in an efficient manner (Firestone site at Mt. Baker station). A mixed use development that provides “eyes on the street/station” late into the night; sets back to create a 18’ sidewalk; provides parking for only a couple of cars; includes a bike garage for residents; will achieve at least LEED silver; and has a green roof. Not only will this project set the standard for great TOD, but we hope will catalyze the transformation of this auto-dominated area into the pedestrian town center envisioned in the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan and Update. [We appreciate Councilmember Clark’s attendance to help kick-off the meeting.]

Proposed Legislation

- Code Barriers to Urban Agriculture: This seems fitting for the Year of Urban Agriculture. A number of proposals have been developed to promote a more sustainable food system in Seattle by expanding opportunities for urban agriculture and identifying incentives to produce and distribute more locally grown food. SEPA process has been completed; legislation should be coming to you shortly. A Council briefing has been scheduled for June 15.
- Vacant and Underused Lots – a Pilot Project, and Light Rail Parking: Also known as interim uses – SEPA for this legislation will be published June 10.

- Technical Construction Codes: We will soon be forwarding seven coordinated bills that regulate construction and use of buildings in Seattle. Six are prepared by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD): the Seattle Building, Energy, Residential, Mechanical, Fuel Gas, and Existing Building codes. The Fire Department is transmitting another bill adopting the 2009 Fire Code.
- Shoreline Master Program, Update Process: We have been meeting with a citizens' advisory committee for a couple years, working through many challenging issues. Major remaining issues include floating home regulations, water-dependent use requirements on waterfront lots, new shoreline setbacks and new single family residential dock requirements. We will also hold a public meeting when the draft is released.

Awards and Other Fun Things

- Neighborhood Planning Outreach Recognized: We can now talk about it ... the Seattle Planning Commission, Department of Neighborhoods, and Department of Planning and Development won the Governor's *Smart Vision Award* for our collective outreach and engagement associated with the Neighborhood Plan Updates and the neighborhood status checks.
- Seattle Green Factor Receives an ASLA Honor Award: The American Society of Landscape Architects honored the Seattle Green Factor, stating: "Seattle Green Factor (SGF) is an innovative development standard designed to increase the quantity and quality of urban landscaping. Informed by European precedents, planners developed a scoring system to promote attractive and ecologically functional landscapes, including elements such as green roofs and walls, permeable paving, tree preservation, and food cultivation. Adopted by City of Seattle in 2006 and expanded in 2009, SGF is inspiring municipalities across the country to develop similar standards."
- Holding Patterns: The Seattle Design Commission received 81 submissions for the "Holding Patterns" Request for Ideas for stimulating activities on vacant or underutilized lots downtown. Submissions were categorized into different options (food, activity, art, etc) and are being scored by a Design Commission subcommittee, based on quality of the idea and feasibility for implementation. The commission plans to hold a targeted workshop in July to discuss how one might implement some of the top ideas.

Reaching the Community:

June 29, 2010: Greenwood Zoning Revisions. A public meeting will be sponsored by DPD to hear discussion on the neighborhood's proposal.

Social Media:

- DPD has three Facebook pages: Neighborhood Planning, Central Waterfront, Comprehensive Plan
- We will soon have a new main DPD Facebook page for most DPD activities
- We will continue using online surveys (such as current SE Seattle NP survey)